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What Professors Don't Tell You About Social Media

Jocelyn Summers

Xavier University - Cincinnati, summersj3@xavier.edu

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What professors don't tell you about social media

Jocelyn Summers

Social media is a huge cluster fuck. This is something I was not taught in my four years as a full-time college communications student. Textbooks, experts in the field, and [research on social media strategy](#), puff up the lovely benefits of using social media for business and advertising purposes, without getting the ugly truth behind these platforms. Why aren't communications experts talking about how the players on social media *communicate*?

What makes the social media business model relies on user-generated content. This is opposed to a traditional business model where a business would sell a product, service, or content they produced. Social media platforms – such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube – make money off of ad spots are sold within their website. Essentially piggy-backing on their users' content.

Content creators that reach a certain threshold of views-per-post and follower/subscriber count can be granted the opportunity to be able to make money off of their own content through [Google AdSense](#). While it is possible to earn an income on social media, content creators can only earn cents on the dollar for sold ad spots.

Here's what that system looks like: The advertisers support platforms and creators with money, the creators support the advertisers and platform with views, and the platform supports the creators and advertisers with a place to let it all happen. This creates, what I like to call, the trinity of profit. If this all works correctly, each entity (content creators, platforms, and advertisers) will get some kind of profit.

Like all symbiotic relationships, it is important for the environment to be mutually beneficial in order to have a successful outcome. The YouTube Adpocalypse and the Logan Paul controversy indicate this is not the current climate of the trinity of profit.

The YouTube [Adpocalypse](#) is a mass exodus of advertisers in response to controversial YouTube videos, causing YouTube to reconfigure their monetization process. While the initial impact of the Adpocalypse hit in March 2017, the impact is still visible on the platform today. YouTube's reconfiguration was seen as an over-correction among [creators](#), insisting YouTube demonetized videos without cause and without an opportunity to appeal. On top of that, they did not notify their creators... they had to find out when they checked for themselves. The Adpocalypse illustrates the precarious and often unfair balance of the trinity of profit. YouTube put money before creators.”



Ethan Klein
@h3h3productions

YouTube has demonetized everything from "Vape Nation" to "Thank You for 3 million" with no notification and no option to appeal
[@TeamYouTube](#)

RETWEETS
4,745

LIKES
30,574



5:33 PM - 29 Mar 2017



Jenna Marbles
@Jenna_Marbles

[@h3h3productions](#) [@TeamYouTube](#) dude same, I've also had a bizarre selection of videos demonetized with no notification or option to appeal.

RETWEETS
148

LIKES
3,284



5:44 PM - 29 Mar 2017

The [Logan Paul controversy](#) in January 2018 further complicated the trust within the trinity of profit. Now, try to set aside the infuriation you feel towards the insensitive adult who posted a video of a man who died by suicide on a global platform. While Logan Paul made some bad decisions, He wasn't the only one.

YouTube is partially to blame for the video, here are a few reasons why:

- They promoted the video to live on the Trending page
- They did not take the video down, instead Paul himself took the video down after hours of being live on the site
- They did not respond to the issue until over a week later

While Paul is successful in his own right, he was given business opportunities by YouTube to appear in a YouTube red original movie, *The Thinning*, and was working on the sequel, *The Thinning: New World Order*.

YouTube's ties with Paul's and their delayed response to the situation demonstrates that YouTube, yet again, put money before the creators. The platform heavily weighted the viewership potential of Paul's videos when deciding how to handle the situation.

Instead of taking down the video featuring a man who died of suicide, YouTube featured it on the Trending page. YouTube chose to stand by and let the content from the cash-cow that is Logan Paul reach his core audience and viewers across the platform.

There is something inherently wrong with the fact that the video was not removed by the platform that is supposed to act in the best interest of advertisers, creators, and viewers

The instance of the Adpocalypse and the Logan Paul situation shows the ugly side of social media that my professors did not tell me about. The trinity of profit is a fragile structure that could collapse from any wrong move.

While the benefits of social media are valid in some cases, keep this information in mind as you enter the professional world. Consider all of sides of the delicate trinity of profit before you gush about how great of a tool social media can be. If you don't, you may end up eating your own words.